

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Currently Amended) A method for screening agents that modulate transcriptional activity or binding of at least one Smad protein selected from the group consisting of: Smad2 spliced in exon 3, Smad3, and Smad 4 with a DNA element selected from the group consisting of: A TGF $\beta$ -inducible DNA element and an activin-inducible DNA element, said method comprising detecting or assaying the extent or result of transcriptional activity or binding in the presence of said agent between said at least one Smad protein or a DNA binding fragment thereof and a double strand oligonucleotide comprising the sequence 5' WXYCAGACZ 3' ~~or a functional equivalent thereof~~, wherein in said nucleotide sequence, W represents A or G, X represents G or T, Y represents C, A, G or T and Z represents A or C.
2. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 wherein the double strand oligonucleotide comprises the sequence 5' WXYCAGACZ 3' ~~or a functional equivalent thereof~~, wherein in said oligonucleotide sequence W represents A or G, X represents G or T, Y represents C, A or G and Z represents A or C.
3. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1 or 2 wherein the double strand oligonucleotide comprises the sequence 5' AG(C/A)CAGACA 3', or a functional equivalent thereof.
4. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1 or 2 wherein the double strand oligonucleotide comprises the sequence 5' ATGCAGACA 3' or 5' GGCCAGACA 3', or a functional equivalent thereof.
5. (Cancelled)
6. (Currently Amended) A kit for screening agents that modulate transcriptional activity or binding of at least one Smad protein selected from the group consisting of: Smad2 spliced in exon 3, Smad 3, and Smad 4 with a DNA element selected from the group consisting of: TGF $\beta$ -inducible DNA element and an activin-inducible DNA element, said kit comprising:
  - said at least one Smad protein;
  - TGF $\beta$  or activin; and

- a double strand DNA molecule comprising the sequence 5' WXYCAGACZ 3' ~~or a functional equivalent thereof~~, wherein in said nucleotide sequence, W represents A or G, X represents G or T, Y represents C, A, G or T and Z represents A or C.

7. (Withdrawn) A method of treating a disease associated with gene regulation by means of one or more Smad proteins and TGF $\beta$  or activin, said method comprising administering to a mammal, including a human, a double strand oligonucleotide comprising the sequence 5' WXYCAGACZ 3' or a functional equivalent thereof, wherein in said nucleotide sequence W represents A or G, X represents G or T, Y represents C, A or G and Z represents A or C.

8. (Withdrawn) Use of a double strand oligonucleotide comprising the sequence 5' WCYCAGACZ 3' or a functional equivalent thereof, wherein in said nucleotide sequences W represents A or G, X represents G or T, Y represents C, A or G and Z represents A or C, in the treatment of a disease associated with gene regulation by one or more Smad proteins and TGF $\beta$  or activin.

9. (Withdrawn) Use of a double strand oligonucleotide comprising the sequence 5' WXYCACACZ 3' or a functional equivalent thereof, wherein in said nucleotide sequence W represents A or G, X represents G or T, Y represents C, A or G and Z represents A or C, in the manufacture of a medicament for the treatment of a disease associated with gene regulation by one or more Smad proteins and TGF $\beta$  or activin.

10. (Currently Amended) A method of treating a disease associated with gene regulation by means of one or more Smad proteins and TGF $\beta$  or activin, said method comprising administering to a mammal, including a human, a therapeutic amount of an agent which inhibits or activates transcriptional activity or binding of said Smad proteins with a promoter or enhancer implicated in the gene regulation by TGF $\beta$  or activin, said promoter or enhancer comprising the nucleotide sequence 5' WXYCAGACZ 3' ~~or a functional equivalent thereof~~, wherein in said nucleotide sequence W represents A or G, X represents G or T, Y represents C, A or G and Z represents A or C.

11. (Withdrawn) Use of a Therapeutic amount of an agent which inhibits or activates transcriptional activity or binding of one or more Smad proteins with a promoter or enhancer implicated in the gene regulation by TGF $\beta$  or activin, said promoter or enhancer comprising the nucleotide sequence 5' WXYCAGACZ 3' or a functional equivalent thereof, wherein in said nucleotide sequence W represents A or G, X represents G or T, Y represents